Appendix D: Pain screening and assessment tools

Pain screening and assessment tools can be self-reported (by the individual experiencing pain and/or their family) or observational (behaviours observed by a health provider in an individual who is unable to communicate or is unconscious). The section below describes validated tools that can be used to assess pain in various populations and contexts. However, this is not an exhaustive list. Please follow organizational policies for pain tool usage. Not all tools are validated for all populations and settings. RNAO does not endorse the use of any one specific pain screening and assessment tool.

Table 12: Self-report pain scales or tools (by population and context)

POPULATION AND CONTEXT	SELF-REPORT TOOLS	TOOL RESOURCE
Acute pain in children	▪ Wong-Baker FACES Pain Rating Scale (3-18 years)	Wong-Baker FACES Foundation [Internet]. Oklahoma City (OK): Wong-Baker FACES Foundation; c2016. Available from: https://wongbakerfaces.org/
	▪ Visual Analogue Scale (VAS) ages 8 and older)	McGill University Health Centre, The Montreal Children's Hospital. Pain assessment & measurement guidelines [Internet]. Montréal (QC): McGill University; 2008. Available from: https://www.mcgill.ca/anesthesia/files/anesthesia/mch_pain_guidelines.pdf
	▪ Faces Pain Scale Revised (FPS-R): A self-report pain intensity measure developed for use with children	Faces Pain Scale – Revised. In: International Association for the Study of Pain (OASP) [Internet]. Washington (DC): IASP; c2021. Available from: https://www.iasp-pain.org/resources/faces-pain-scale-revised/ *Requires permission to publish tool itself
	▪ Numerical Rating Scale (NRS)-11 (ages 6 and older)	Trottier ED, Ali S, Doré-Bergeron, MJ, Chauvin-Kimoff L. Position statement: best practices in pain assessment and management for children. Paediatr Child Health. 2022;27(7):429-37. Available from: https://doi.org/10.1093/pch/pxac048

POPULATION AND CONTEXT	SELF-REPORT TOOLS	TOOL RESOURCE
Acute pain in adolescents	▪ Wong-Baker FACES pain scale (3-18 years)	See above
	▪ Visual Analogue Scale (VAS)	See above
	▪ Numerical rating scale (NRS)-11	See above
Acute pain in adults (including cognitively intact older adults)	▪ Brief Pain Inventory (BPI)	The Brief Pain Inventory. In: The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center [Internet]. [place unknown]: MD Anderson Cancer Center; c2024. Available from: https://www.mdanderson.org/research/departments-labs-institutes/departments-divisions/symptom-research/symptom-assessment-tools/brief-pain-inventory.html
	▪ Visual Analogue Scale (VAS)	See above
	▪ Numerical Rating Scale (NRS)-11	See above
	▪ Summary of self-report pain assessment tools in cognitively intact older adults	Kang Y, Demiris G. Self-report pain assessment tools for cognitively intact older adults: integrative review. Int J Older People Nurs. 2018 Jun;13(2):e12170. Available from: https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC5886828/pdf/nihms902431.pdf

POPULATION AND CONTEXT	SELF-REPORT TOOLS	TOOL RESOURCE
Ambulatory and adult in-patient settings and assessment of chronic pain	▪ Brief Pain Inventory (BPI) [short form] ▪ The Clinically Aligned Pain Assessment Measure (CAPA) ▪ Defense and Veterans Pain Rating Scale ▪ The Geriatric Pain Measure ▪ The PEG ▪ The Short Form 36 (QoL tool) ▪ Bodily Pain Scale ▪ Pain Monitor	Scher, C. Petti E, Meador L, et al. Multidimensional pain assessment tools for ambulatory and inpatient nursing practice. Pain Manag Nurs. 2020 Oct;21(5):416-22. Available from: https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7554114/pdf/nihms-1579700.pdf

Table 13: Observational (behavioural) tools (by population and context)

POPULATION AND CONTEXT	OBSERVATIONAL (BEHAVIOURAL) TOOLS	TOOL RESOURCE
Pre-term and term infants	For acute procedural pain: ▪ Neonatal Infant Pain Scale (NIPS) (facial expression, cry, breathing patterns, arms, legs, state of arousal) ▪ Premature Infant Pain Profile (PIPP) ▪ Premature Infant Pain Profile-Revised (PIPP-R) (includes additional behavioural indicators) ▪ Face, Legs, Activity, Cry, Consolability Scale (FLACC or r-FLACC) (validated for birth to adolescence)	UW Health Kids. Neonatal Infant Pain Scales [Internet]. Madison (WI): University of Wisconsin; [updated 2021 Jul]. Available from: https://patient.uwhealth.org/healthfacts/7711 Stevens BJ, Gibbins S, Yamada J, et al. The premature Infant Pain Profile-Revised (PIPP-R): initial validation and feasibility. Clin J Pain. 2014 Mar;30(3):238-43. Available from: https://efisiopediatric.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/The-Premature-Infant-Pain-Profile-Revised-PIPP-R.pdf Trottier ED, Ali S, Doré-Bergeron, MJ, Chauvin-Kimoff L. Position statement: best practices in pain assessment and management for children. Paediatr Child Health. 2022;27(7):429-37. Available from: https://doi.org/10.1093/pch/pxac048

POPULATION AND CONTEXT	OBSERVATIONAL (BEHAVIOURAL) TOOLS	TOOL RESOURCE
Pre-term and term infants cont.	For post-operative pain: ▪ Neonatal Pain, Agitation and Sedation Scale (N-PASS) (some validation for acute procedural pain) (crying/ irritability, behaviour state, facial expression, extremities tone, vital signs) ▪ Pain Assessment Tool (PAT) (Posture/tone, sleep pattern, expression, colour, cry, respirations, heart rate, oxygen saturation, blood pressure, nurse's perception)	Hillman BA, Tabrizi MN, Gauda EB, et al. The Neonatal Pain, Agitation and Sedation scale and the bedside nurse's assessment of neonates. J Perinatol. 2015;35(2):128-31. Available from: https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC5526063/ Spence K, Gillies D, Harrison D, et al. A reliable pain assessment tool for clinical assessment in the neonatal intensive care unit. JOGNN. 2005 Jan;34(1):80-6. Available from: https://doi.org/10.1177/0884217504272810
	For prolonged pain: ▪ COMFORTneo Scale	Meesters NJ, Dilles T, van Rosmalen J. COMFORTneo scale: a reliable and valid instrument to measure prolonged pain in neonates? J Perinatol. 2023;43:595-600. Available from: https://doi.org/10.1038/s41372-023-01628-1
	▪ Summary of validated neonatal pain scales	Olsson E, Ahl H, Bengtsson K. The use and reporting of neonatal pain scales: a systematic review of randomized trials. Pain. 2021;162(2):353-360. Available from: https://doi.org/10.1097/j.pain.0000000000002046
	▪ Practice update for the assessment and management of pain in preterm infants	Campbell-Yeo M, Eriksson M, Benoit B. Assessment and management of pain in preterm infants: a practice update. Children. 2022;9(2):244. Available from: https://doi.org/10.3390/children9020244
Children in acute pain with developmental disability	▪ Revised Face, Legs, Activity, Cry, and Consolability Scale (r-FLACC) ▪ Non-Communicating Children's Pain Checklist – Post-operative Version (NCCPC-PV) ▪ Individualized Numeric Rating Scale (INRS) ▪ Pediatric Pain Profile (PPP)	Crosta QR, Ward TM, Walker AJ, Peters LM. A review of pain measures for hospitalized children with cognitive impairment. J Spec Pediatr Nurs. 2014 Apr;19(2):109-18. Available from: https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4100776/pdf/nihms-573204.pdf

POPULATION AND CONTEXT	OBSERVATIONAL (BEHAVIOURAL) TOOLS	TOOL RESOURCE
Children with pain in critical care	▪ COMFORT Behaviour Scale (COMFORT-B) (intubated and ventilated, 0-18 years)	Boerlage AA, Ista E, Duivenvoorden HJ. The COMFORT behaviour scale detects clinically meaningful effects of analgesic and sedative treatment. Eur J Pain. 2015:19(4);473-79. Available from: https://doi.org/10.1002/ejp.569 Sedation and Weaning in Children (SANDWICH). COMFORT B teaching posters. Belfast (UK): Queen's University Belfast; 2018-2019. Available from: https://www.qub.ac.uk/sites/sandwich/filestore/champion-pack/Filetoupload,909564,en.pdf
Adolescents experiencing chronic pain	▪ Bath Adolescent Pain Questionnaire (BAPQ) ▪ PROMIS Pediatric Pain Interference Scale (PII) ▪ Child Activity Limitations Questionnaire (CALQ) ▪ Pain Interference Index (PII) ▪ Pain Experience Questionnaire (PEQ) ▪ Pain-Related Problem List for Adolescents (PRBL-A)	Greenough MJ, Jibb L, Lewis KB, et al. A systematic review of the biopsychosocial dimensions affected by chronic pain in children and adolescents: identifying reliable and valid pediatric multidimensional chronic pain assessment tools. Pain Rep. 2023;8(6):e1099. Available from: https://doi.org/10.1097/PR9.0000000000001099
Pain in adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities	▪ HELP tool (health, environmental support, lived experience, psychiatric conditions)	Surrey Place. HELP with emotional and behavioural concerns in adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities [Internet]. Toronto (ON): Surrey Place; [updated 2019 Jul]. Available from: https://oen.echoontario.ca/media/HELP-4-BTC-in-IDD.pdf
	▪ Chronic Pain Scale for Nonverbal Adults with Intellectual Disabilities (CPS-NAID)	Centre for Pediatric Pain Research. Chronic pain scale for nonverbal adults with intellectual disabilities (CPS-NAID) [Internet]. Halifax (NS): Centre for Pediatric Pain Research; 2013. Available from: https://www.pediatric-pain.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/CPSNAID.pdf

POPULATION AND CONTEXT	OBSERVATIONAL (BEHAVIOURAL) TOOLS	TOOL RESOURCE
Pain in adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities cont.	▪ Disability Distress Assessment Tool (DisDAT)	How to use DisDAT. In: St Oswald's Hospice. Newcastle upon Tyne (UK): St Oswald's Hospice; [date unknown]. Available from: https://www.stoswaldsuk.org/how-we-help/we-educate/education/resources/how-to-use-disdat/ St Oswald's Hospice. DisDAT: distress and discomfort assessment tool [Internet]. Version 22. Newcastle upon Tyne (UK): St Oswald's Hospice; 2022. Available from: https://www.stoswaldsuk.org/wp-con-tent/uploads/2022/11/disdat-22.pdf
Adults in critical care (intubated and ventilated)	▪ Behavioral Pain Scale (BPS or BPS-NI)	Gélinas C, Joffe AM, Szumita PM, et al. A psychometric analysis update of behavioural pain assessment tools for non-communicative, critically ill adults. AACN Adv Crit Care. 2019;30(4):365-87. Available from: https://doi.org/10.4037/aacnacc2019952
	▪ Critical-Care Pain Observation Tool (CPOT or CPOT-Neuro)	Gélinas C, Bérubé M, Puntillo KA, et al. Validation of the Critical-Care Pain Observation Tool-Neuro in brain-injured adults in the intensive care unit: a prospective cohort study. Crit Care. 2021;25(1):142. Available from: https://doi.org/10.1186/s13054-021-03561-1